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Governor Baker Signs Legislation Ending Civil Commitments at MCI-Framingham for Substance Misuse Disorder

New Law Prohibits Women from Correctional Institutions to Improve Treatment Options

BOSTON – Today, Governor Charlie Baker was joined by Health and Human Services Secretary Marylou Sudders, House Speaker Robert DeLeo, Senate President Stan Rosenberg, Ways and Means Chair Senator Karen Spilka and Attorney General Maura Healey for a bill signing ceremony to prohibit the civil commitment of women facing substance misuse disorders to MCI-Framingham and provide addiction treatment services at Shattuck and Taunton State Hospitals.

"With the support of the legislature and Attorney General, our administration is proud to have delivered on a promise that took more than 30 years to fulfill," **said Governor Baker**. "Now, women with substance abuse disorder who are civilly committed will not be sent to MCI Framingham and will have the opportunity to get treatment instead of jail time."

"Addiction is a disease and must be treated as such," **said Speaker DeLeo**. "By ending the practice of sending civilly committed women to MCI-Framingham we are taking one more step to helping residents – our sisters, mothers, daughters, wives – recover. I'm proud of the landmark substance addiction legislation we have passed and the unprecedented funding increases for treatment, and I pledge unwavering commitment to fighting this devastating epidemic."

"The bill ends the practice of treating women with substance abuse issues like

criminals,” **said Senate President Rosenberg**. “We need to treat substance abuse like the disease it is and provide access to treatment in an appropriate setting so these women have an opportunity to get on a path to recovery.”

“People who are hooked on heroin and opioids need treatment and care,” **said Attorney General Healey**. “This new law will end the practice of sending women struggling with addiction to prison without access to the treatment services they need. As we continue to battle this epidemic, it’s critical we get people real help that will give them a fighting chance at a better life.”

This reform, which was recommended as part of the Governor’s Opioid Working Group, will end the practice of sending women committed for treatment for a substance use disorder under section 35 of chapter 123 of the General Laws to MCI-Framingham. For the past 25 years, individuals committed under section 35 have been sent to this correctional institution instead of a detox center—preventing the proper treatment options for women. In the future, if the only appropriate setting for a civilly committed woman is a secure facility, women can only be committed to an approved facility by the Department of Public Health or the Department of Mental Health.

In the past year, the Baker-Polito Administration has added 28 beds at Shattuck and 15 beds at Taunton State Hospital, with an additional 30 beds at Taunton in the summer of 2016. In addition, 58 treatment beds at Departments of Mental Health and Public Health facilities are under development with the first beds coming on line in January 2016. Last July, Governor Baker allotted \$5.8 million in a supplemental budget to move women civilly committed for substance abuse problems to a hospital, such as Shattuck or Taunton State Hospitals.

Today’s bill signing serves as the latest effort across state government to crack down on the opioid epidemic plaguing the Commonwealth and claiming four lives a day. Earlier this month, the House passed a substance abuse treatment and prevention bill that is now pending in the Senate, and Governor Charlie Baker was recently joined by Attorney General Maura Healey, Representative John Fernandes and a representative from the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police to sign a fentanyl trafficking bill into law, authored by Attorney General Healey, to increase the penalty for the possession and distribution of fentanyl to 20 years for distributing more than 10 grams.

Separately, numerous recommendations from the Governor’s opioid working group have already been enacted to begin eradicating this public health crisis. The administration has budgeted more than \$114 million in spending for substance misuse prevention, education and treatment, increased bulk purchasing of Narcan in

municipalities and changed reporting requirements for the Prescription Monitoring Program from 7 days to 24 hours. One hundred and thirteen treatment beds have opened in six communities (Quincy, Plymouth, New Bedford, Boston, Westborough, Fall River) with more expected in Greenfield this winter.

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